FEATURING BEST PRACTICES
OF STATE AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Distance Learning

TELETECHNET

Old Dominion University
**implemented this best practice
in July 1994**

*Qualifying under the
Best Practices catalogue*

3   Provide Capabilities
31 Manage resources and capabilities
312 Deliver products and services to customers

Best Practice Summary
(how it works, how you measure it)

With funding from the Virginia General Assembly, Old Dominion University significantly expanded its distance learning efforts in July of 1994 to provide increased access to higher education to place-bound adults across the Commonwealth. In partnership with the Virginia Community College System, citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia were provided an opportunity to complete baccalaureate degrees in any one of twenty degree programs. Students could participate in classes at each of the community colleges broadcast from the Norfolk campus of Old Dominion University. Through the use of satellite, telephone and computer technologies, students interact with each other across the state, including those enrolled at the Norfolk campus, and with the faculty assigned to teach the courses. Faculty completes training to utilize the technology and organize instructional materials to best suit the distant student learner. Old Dominion University site directors are assigned to assist students at each

community college location with admissions, registration, counseling, exam oversight and proctoring, and distribution of instructional materials between the home campus and the distant site.

Impact on the Process Organizational Performance (OUTCOMES)

TELETECHNET has dramatically increased access to higher education for the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. During academic year 1998-1999, nearly 17,000 registrations in almost 300 courses were documented, a four-fold increase from the 4,448 enrollments in 1994-95. At the same time, the average cost to create a full-time equivalent (FTE) student decreased from over $9,000 in 1994-95 to less than $5,000 per FTE student in 1998-99, less than the cost per FTE student for instruction on the main campus and a considerable cost savings to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Another significant result of the initiative is the effect that the system has had upon the operations of the University, in general. All student service processes have been revised to accommodate the distance learner, making them more accessible and "user-friendly" for all students, and more than 300 faculty have received advanced training in the use of state-of-the-art instructional technologies.

The results of the initiative include:

- a significant retention rate (86%) among TELETECHNET students
- a perception by distance students that the education program offered by the University is excellent, academic achievement results equal to and in some cases better than the on-campus counterpart, and
- a report by 51% of the faculty who teach on TELETECHNET that they are better instructors as a result of training.

Best Practice Qualification

The identification of TELETECHNET as a "Best Practice" was determined through several outside assessments as well as through internal assessment efforts in place to track student progress, success, and satisfaction. The first was a national study of distance learning networks by the California State University system under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This student concluded that, compared to on-campus classroom instruction, TELETECHNET:

- provides equivalent learning outcomes
- increases access to public four-year higher education for Virginia residents

- positively influences institutional renewal/growth through improvements in teaching practices and program articulations with Virginia's community colleges, and
- provides substantial cost savings.

Five years of internal assessments have revealed that the TELETECHNET distance students, as a group, when compared to their main campus colleagues, perform as well or better and are significantly more satisfied with the Old Dominion University educational experience. In addition, TELETECHET has received national recognition from several other sources:

- *Forbes* magazine identified Old Dominion University as one of the nation's top twenty "cyber universities" (June 16, 1997).
- In 1998, the University received the American Association of University Administrators "Exemplary Model of Administrative Leadership" Award for TELETECHNET's innovative "two-plus-two" partnerships with the Virginia community colleges.
- And, in March of 1999, the U.S. Distance Learning Association presented its award for "Distance Learning Programming" to Old Dominion University.

For Additional Information

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